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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: STRONG BUT MEASURED REACTION TO  
ALBANIAN FM MUSTAJAJ STATEMENT ON BORDERS

REF: TIRANA 276

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(B) & (D).

¶1. (U) Macedonian government reaction to Albanian FM Mustafaj's March 13 statement on Albanian Alsat TV that Albania could not guarantee inviolability of borders with Kosovo or Macedonia "if division of Kosovo takes place" (reftel) has been strong but measured. MFA State Counselor Milan Spiridonovski told us the Ministry is "concerned" about the statement, and said that FM Mitreva discussed the matter by telephone with FM Mustafaj on March 15.

¶2. (C) The Prime Minister's National Security Adviser, Aleks Matovski, told us March 16 that the government considered the statement "unfortunate and ill-advised," considering the good bilateral cooperation the countries have enjoyed over the past several years. Matovski said he hoped the statement had been made intentionally, and that the Albanian government would issue a public clarification. The GOM would not overreact to the statement, he said, and the incident would not cause lasting damage to bilateral relations.

¶3. (U) The local press quoted MFA sources as saying that Mustafaj told Mitreva during their March 15 phone conversation that his statement had been misinterpreted and taken out of context. PM Buckovski reportedly also told the media that Mustafaj's comment had been taken out of context. Ethnic Albanian DUI (governing coalition junior partner) and DPA (opposition) told us they had no comment on Mustafaj's statement. Opposition VMRO-DPMNE said the statement was ill-considered and undermined "international legal principles regarding the non-changeability of state borders."

¶4. (C) Comment: We appreciate Ambassador Ries's approach to Mustafaj on this issue (reftel), and fully support her message that such statements are ill-placed in the context of the final status process. Such statements also feed ethnic Macedonian suspicions that their ethnic Albanian compatriots harbor the notion of an eventual union with Albania and Kosovo. We believe a public restatement by the Contact Group of its guiding principles regarding "no changes in borders, and no partition of Kosovo or union with another country or part of a country" could help calm the waters here and reassure Macedonians that the international community stands firmly behind the country's territorial integrity.

